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Effect of Religion on Domestic Violence Perpetration Among American Adults

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EFFECT OF RELIGION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATION AMONG AMERICAN ADULTS

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Abstract

After Hirschi and Stark's *Hellfire and Delinquency* (1969), researchers have been seeking to determine whether there is a correlational link between religion and crime. This paper seeks to add to the literature by correlating domestic violence with four elements of religion (use of belief to solve everyday problems, prayer frequency, religious importance, and attendance of worship) that correspond with the four elements of Hirschi's social control theory (attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement, respectively) (1969). It also includes male victims of domestic violence among female victims, unlike most previous literature. Using a series of logistic regression models, only attendance of worship, the variable that signified involvement, had statistical significance in any model, which may signify the need to focus more on the behavioral measures of social control theory rather than the attitudinal measures.

Introduction

Since 1969 and Hirschi and Stark's *Hellfire*, people have been interested in the link between religion and crime. Despite null findings in a previous study by Stark and Hirschi (1969), Stark (1996) has maintained that sustaining religion through interaction with conventional others and fostering a collective consensus on the importance and value of religion fosters conformity to social norms and reinforces religion as a structural safeguard against crime. Several meta-analyses and studies have agreed with Stark's theory and have found an inverse relationship between religiosity and crime.

The most dominant theory in the research on the role of religion and deviance is Hirschi's (1969) social control theory (Jang and Johnson, 2001). The main idea behind social control theory is that, since humans are animals, humans are naturally capable of committing violent acts (Hirschi, 1969). Therefore, violence does not need to be explained, but why some individuals do not commit violence does. Hirschi posits that conformity "to the mother unit" (e.g., social institutions of family, education) is the reason that some do not commit crime (Hirschi, 1969). Conformity comes from socialization, which is the formation of the bond between individual and society. There are four elements of the social bond. They are attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. The stronger each element is, the stronger the bond between individual and society (Hirschi, 1969). Researchers, such as Krohn et al (1983), have found a link between social control and deviance, such as smoking, however, the focus of this

research has been on the social bonds facilitated by the family and education, with far less focus on religious bonds.

In this study, I will attempt to determine if there is a link between religion and an understudied outcome, the perpetration of domestic violence, using social control theory's four components of the social bond: belief, involvement, attachment, and commitment (Hirschi, 1969). The essential belief behind social control of religion is that people who are more strongly connected to society through religion are less likely to commit crimes (Hirschi, 1969). Religion, for the purpose of this study, is being defined as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation deity or deities. Religion involves devotional and ritual observances, an organized hierarchy of leadership that separates clergy from worshippers, and often a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs (Segal, 2004).

The premise behind the religion and social control connection is religious adolescents are bonded to and socialized by religious institutions, while non-religious adolescents are not (Hirschi, 1969). In 1999, Sherkat and Ellison consistently found that socialization among religious families has a direct influence "through the socialization of beliefs and commitments" (p. 10). Therefore, religious adolescents' behaviors are guided by sanctions derived from religion, while the behavior of non-religious adolescents is not (Jang and Johnson, 2001). That is, being more religious would increase the social bond by increasing the acceptance of socially acceptable norms, as their deity demands them, an increased attachment to clergy or other worshippers, creating role models, increased investments in groups such as youth group, prayer circles, and Bible study, and

increasing time spent reaching for the goal of eternal paradise and avoiding the risk of eternal punishment.

The majority of studies on religion and crime look largely at general delinquency and adolescents, which prevents them from being generalizable to the larger populations, such as adults or more serious offenders. Furthermore, there is evidence that the impact of religion is different for crimes with a victim than crimes with no victim (Baier and Wright, 2001). Essentially, the claim is that religion serves as a stronger deterrent for crimes with no victim, like gambling and drug use, than for crimes with a victim, such as murder and theft (Sumter, 2018). This is thought to be due to the fact that religion acts alone to condemn non-victim crimes, while multiple social institutions like education and the family as well as religion serve to condemn crimes with a victim, which makes religious condemnations redundant and largely ignored (Burkett, 1980). Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of religion on domestic violence, which is a very interpersonal crime, generally involveing an indivudal known very well to the offender, and largely socially condemned. Thus, this crime may have a different relationship than crimes with no victim.

Domestic violence, per the United Nations Commission of the Status of Women is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological, or sexual harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Heise, 1993, p. 5). While this definition is a good starting point in operationalizing domestic violence, there is a key component missing- the involvement of male victims.

While the majority of police reports come from women, men also report this crime. Around twenty-four percent of all domestic violence victims are men (Truman and Morgan, 2014). Unfortunately, men have been largely excluded from the empirical studies on this topic and the narratives surrounding it. Simply because men do not report being victims does not mean females are not perpetrators.

In fact, Stets and Straus (1992) found that women are just as likely or more likely to engage in domestic violence when compared to men, even when controlling for severity. A meta-analysis by Archer (2000) corroborated this, by finding that women are just as likely to use physical aggression as men and engage in violence more often than men (Archer, 2000). Finally, in 2005, Williams and Frieze, after studying the National Morbidity Survey data, concluded more women than men reported engaging in domestic violence and slightly more men than women reported being the victim of severe violence. Due to the previous definition and the statistics on male victimization, domestic violence is being operationalized in this study as physical, emotional, and sexual violence against the subject's partner, without ascribing gender to the perpetrator and victim roles.

There are some general trends or characteristics that some domestic violence perpetrators share. Risk factors that increase the likelihood of domestic violence in the United States are: the man is unemployed, uses illegal drugs at least once a year, saw his father abuse his mother, has a blue-collar occupation, did not graduate from high school, and is between 18 and 30 years old, and income is below poverty level. Other correlates include the man and woman are from different religious backgrounds, the couple cohabitates but is not married, and either person uses severe violence toward children in

the house (Berry, 2000 p 25). However, the role of religion in explaining domestic violence has been understudied.

A study on the role of religion via social control theory on the perpetration of domestic violence like this one is needed for several purposes. First, while religion has shown promising empirical tests in regards to limiting crime in general, it has been understudied in reference to limiting the perpetration of domestic violence. Social scientists agree domestic violence is a large problem, but have largely neglected the potential protective factor of religion. Also, men are largely excluded from studies of domestic violence, as this crime disproportionately affects women. However, with the lack of reporting that happens in crimes such as this, it is hard to ascertain the true prevalence rate of male victims. Therefore, men need to be included in the literature as much as women. Finally, social control theory, which is the tradition where a large number of studies regarding the link between religion and crime originate, also does not include gender in the concept of crime. It is attempting to be a general theory of crime and posits that social controls impact everyone in similar ways, regardless of gender. Since this crime is so gender-based, it would be remiss to exclude an examination of the effects of gender from the study.

Literature Review

Social Control Theory and Religion

As previously mentioned, there are four dimensions to the social bond at the core of social control theory that constrain individuals from committing crime: attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement.

Attachment is the idea that corresponds to the ties of emotional attachments. It is important that the individual bond between parents or other institutions become intrinsic, as the bond must maintain control over the person when the family or other institution may not have the ability to directly supervise the individual. Therefore, a social bond is considered to have formed when a person is so emotionally attached to the institution they internalize the things they are taught (Hirschi, 1969). It is hypothesized that attachment may serve as a protective factor against domestic violence via religion by giving the individual a second, pseudo-family environment in the place of worship.

Commitment is the rational dimension of the bond that represents the investment in conventional behavior that the youth risks by committing a crime (Hirschi, 1969). In essence, this is the costs of engaging in deviant behavior. If a person has a desire to obtain a conventional status symbol, for example a well-paying job, that person is unlikely to engage in crime because having a record, for instance, would limit the capability of that person from obtaining this coveted status symbol (Hirschi, 1969).

Knowing this, it is hypothesized that commitment may have protective effects on domestic violence through religion by giving the individual eternal stakes in conforming to acceptable behavior. In the Abrahamic Faiths (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), there is a concept of an afterlife, and a designated place for those who are "good" and one for those who are "bad" (Segal, 2004: 15). Since goodness and badness are largely socially constructed, places of worship tend to encourage cooperation with secular laws and divine laws, both of which condemn deviance and violence. If the individual fails to conform to these laws, they are risking the goal of going to the "good" place.

Involvement refers to participation in conventional activities that lead to socially valued success and status objectives and is the behavioral dimension of the social bond (Hirschi, 1969). Those who spend a lot of time engaging in conventional activities tend to have less time to engage in deviant acts. For instance, a person who spends hours each night doing homework will logically experience fewer potential opportunities to engage in crime or deviance (Hirschi, 1969). Involvement may curb the engagement in domestic violence through religion by limiting the time the person is able to engage in deviant acts. The more time a person spends in church, the less time they have to spend engaging in crime or delinquency that could risk the achievement of socially acceptable objectives.

Belief is the moral dimension of the bond as it is the acceptance of the moral validity of the central value system (Hirschi, 1969). The varying degree in the acceptance of social rules is central to social control theory because the less people feel bound to social rules, the more likely they are to break the rules. Hirschi argues there is one dominant set of values and even delinquents may recognize the validity of those values, although they may not feel bound to them because of weakened ties to the dominant social order (Hirschi, 1969).

It could be argued that belief in the central social value system through religion could limit the perpetration of domestic violence because of the importance placed on obeying and conforming to the rules and laws of the holy figure. If a person believes in the legitimacy of the rules and laws handed down by their deity, they are more likely to follow them, and therefore not engage in delinquency or crime that runs counter to them.

Empirical Evidence of Religion, Social Control, and Crime

The proposed link between religion and crime has received empirical attention. Hirschi and Stark tested their claim that religion could be a reason that some people desisted from crime, however, they found no correlation between church attendance on ethical behavior. They then concluded that religion was irrelevant to delinquency (Hirschi and Stark, 1969). It is important to remember, however, this study is outdated by fifty years. Also, and perhaps most importantly, they only examined one dimension of the bond, rather than all four. Moreover, Stark (1996) argued that sustaining religion through interaction and fostering a collective consensus on the importance and value of religion fosters conformity to social norms and reinforces religion as a structural safeguard against crime, even after the null findings. This notion is confirmed in the literature from the past 50 years.

Since Hirschi and Stark (1969), the literature indicates a negative/protective relationship between religion and crime, in general. Desmond et al (2008) found the stronger a youth's commitment to their religious beliefs, partly through their degree of involvement in religious activities and/or practices that socialized the moral transgressions of criminal behavior, the lower their involvement in delinquency. Previous research has also indicated that behavioral measures of religiosity, such as the frequency of worship attendance, tend to be more strongly correlated to deviance than the measures of religious attitudes or beliefs (Evans et al, 1995; Tittle and Welch, 1983).

Rohrbaugh and Jessor (1975) found a significant negative relationship between religion and proneness to deviancy and deviant behavior. They also found significant positive relationships between religion and personal control (Rohrbaugh and Jessor, 1975). A 1991 study came to similar conclusions. Welch et al found a negative

relationship between religiosity and intentions to commit deviant acts (1991). They found the deterrent effects of religion was significant across all forms of deviance (Welch et al, 1991).

Studies examining religious affiliation indicate a more complex relationship with age being an important factor. Using arrest files from the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and macro-level measures of religious adherence from the religious congregations and membership study and the American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2010 US census for information on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of each county (Harris et al, 2015), Bengston et al (2015) found evangelical Protestant adherence is positively associated with adult homicide but not juvenile homicide (Bengston et al, 2015). In addition, Evangelical Protestant adherence was found to have a negative association with juvenile but not adult robbery. Finally, they found Evangelical Protestant adherence has a statistically significant and negative association with juvenile but not adult assault (Harris et al, 2015). This may be because the structural and cultural resources, such as youth groups and the presence of more principled religious guidance, present in communities with greater Evangelical Protestant presence may enhance informal social controls and normative socialization mechanisms that reduce juvenile violence and crime more so than adults (Jang and Johnson, 2010).

They found Catholic adherence is negatively associated with adult homicide, but not juvenile (Bengston et al, 2015). Also, Catholic adherence has a crime-reducing association with adult but not juvenile robbery. Finally, Catholicism has a positive relationship with juvenile but not adult assault. The presence of Catholicism has a negative association to adult crime perhaps due to the considerable resources devoted to

community-centered counseling centers, homeless shelters, and job placement services that are largely directed towards the adult population (Bengston et al, 2015).

Religion and Domestic Violence

Past studies have found robust negative links between religion and domestic violence. One of the most convincing is Ellison and Anderson (2001). They analyzed data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households, which was comprised of 13,017 men and women in the United States. They hypothesized that religion decreases the likelihood of domestic violence because religious communities increase an individual's level of social integration. This is believed to deter domestic violence by providing support, assistance with coping, and increasing opportunities for emotional release. Also, religious communities limit the isolation and privacy of couples, as well as giving each party regular, and potentially confiding, contacts. This makes concealing domestic violence difficult. Regular churchgoers report having more social support than their secular counterparts, on average, and are also more likely to perceive their social networks as reliable and satisfying. Religious involvement may also lower the risk of domestic violence by reducing the rates of alcohol and drug abuse, which are common facilitators of domestic violence (Ellison and Anderson, 2001).

In a follow-up study, Ellison et al (2007) conducted a study that examined the effect of religious practices, in terms of the frequency of service attendance, on domestic violence. The researchers analyzed data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households. The sample comprised cohabiting couples, 3,134 men and 3,666 women. The authors found a negative relationship between the frequency of attendance of religious events and the likelihood of domestic violence. For every one-

unit increase in religious attendance, the likelihood of domestic violence fell by 5%. The protective factor of religion was more robust for African-Americans than for Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites (Ellison et al, 2007). In 1999, Ellison et al drew the same conclusion regarding the link between domestic violence and religion but reported that for men the protective factor of religion is only found in weekly attendees. For women, the benefits extended to monthly attendees as well (Ellison et al, 1999). Finally, Ellison and Anderson (2001) found that regular attendance had a robust and statistically significant negative relationship with domestic abuse (Ellison and Anderson, 2001). Men who attended church once a week or more were about 60.7% less likely to commit domestic violence than nonattenders. Women who attend services at least once a week were about 44.2% less likely to report domestic violence against a partner.

Additionally, a study of 1,440 married couples in the US found there is a negative correlation between religious attendance and intimate partner violence against women (Cunradi, Caetano, and Schafer, 2002). A representative sample of Canadian men and women reported a weak negative relationship between religious attendance and intimate partner violence (Brinkerhoff, Grandin, and Lupri, 1992).

These studies run into much the same pitfalls as the previous studies. While their claims are useful to create an argument that such a link existed at one time, it is hard to imagine the link maintained the same power in the course of a decade or more, especially when considering the increase in domestic violence perpetration from 2003 to 2012 that was shown by Truman and Morgan (2014). Also, religion is studied as a correlate to domestic violence via its effect on masculinity. A study focusing on the correlation of

domestic violence as an agent in social control regarding all formations of the bond has not been conducted. New studies are key to improve the literature.

The role of religious groups, especially the Abrahamic faiths, in domestic violence, especially conservative groups, tend to be that they endorse traditional gender roles where husbands are given authority to make binding decisions for wives and children. These beliefs also encourage wives to submit to and implement the husband's decisions. These beliefs can contribute to domestic violence by being interpreted as sanctioning men's violence against women (Jung and Olsen, 2017).

To empirically test this, Jung and Olsen attempt to answer what the role is of individual-level religiosity in explaining cross-national attitudes toward domestic violence (2017). The study was informed by a sample of 55,523 people from 49 countries. The authors used the 5th wave of the World Values Surveys (Jung and Olsen, 2017). They found people with a high level of religiosity are less likely to approve of domestic violence (Jung and Olsen, 2017). This relationship was robust. Even with the addition of country-level variables, the negative association with religiosity and wife-beating approval remains significant. In countries with high levels of anomie (in this case, anomie refers to a situation where general normative constraint is weak either because of a lack of agreement about norms or because the behaviors proscribed by the norms are generally viewed as legitimate behaviors), personal religion has a more negative effect on the approval of wife-beating. By contrast, for those living in countries with lower levels of anomie, the slope between personal religiosity and the approval of wife beating is comparatively flat but still negative. Laws regulating domestic violence

did not have a significant relationship with the approval of intimate partner violence, interestingly (Jung and Olsen, 2017).

Finally, individuals who regard religion as important in their lives may be more persuaded by religious norms and worldviews that, in most cases, promote the sanctity of marriage and condemn intimate partner violence (Jung and Olsen, 2017). A 2004 study by Berkel, Vandiver, and Bahner that used a convenience sample of 316 white American college students found spiritual actions, such as praying and reading holy texts, are positively associated with sympathy for battered women. Why does religion have such an impact regarding domestic violence? Of the theories that seek to answer this question, social control theory is the most cited (Jang and Johnson, 2001).

Current Study

This study seeks to answer whether there is a link between domestic violence and religion as conceptualized by social control theory. It is hypothesized that religious variables will have a negative relationship with domestic violence, though the relationship may be weak. The current study has many differences from the studies previously cited. First, the results will be informed by a nationally representative study while the previous literature have been informed by college students or nonprobability samples. This study will also explicitly cover the four components of social control theory, which has not yet been done. To test the bonds that are proposed in social control theory, the frequency of church attendance will represent the involvement in socially acceptable activities, frequency of prayer represents commitment, whether they employ their beliefs in making decisions represents attachment, and the importance of religion to represent the belief in socially acceptable norms. The current study will also look at both

attendance and beliefs surrounding religion and religiosity, as opposed to focusing on one or the other, as previous studies have done. Finally, the current study will examine gender differences in the hypothesized protective link between domestic violence perpetration and social control variables.

In the literature, when the link between religion and domestic violence is studied through the lens of social control theory, a negative relationship is found. However, according to Burkett (1980), religion serves as a stronger deterrent for crimes with no victim, like gambling and drug use than for crimes with a victim, such as murder and theft. Since domestic violence is a crime that has a victim and this study is examining all foundations of social control theory, unlike previous research, it is hypothesized the measures will have a protective effect, albeit a weak one.

Data and Methods

To test the hypothesis that there is a link between religion and domestic violence, the data being used is from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). It is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample ("About Add Health", 2016). It began with adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States during the 1994-95 school year that have since been followed into young adulthood with four waves of subsequent interviews. The specific wave used is Wave III, which was conducted in 2001 and 2002, because domestic violence was the most prevalent in this wave compared to others. The respondents were 18 to 26 at the time of this wave of the survey.

Add Health has a sample size of 15,356 total individuals in the initial wave. The public access data for the first wave has a sample of 6,000 individuals. The public data

consists of 1/3 the full sample (1/2 of the core sample and 1/2 of the over-sample of African-American adolescents with a parent who has a college degree, chosen at random). This study was informed by the public access data for Wave III, which is a sample of 4,882, a subset of the 6,000 individuals that comprise the public use data in Wave I ("About Add Health, 2016). After running attrition analyses on key variables such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, education, delinquency, and relationships, there was no statistical evidence to conclude the public access data is different from the full sample of the public use data in Wave I.

The analytic sample is further reduced by 932 people who had never been in a relationship from the sample, as they would have never had the opportunity to engage in intimate partner violence. Finally, this study uses listwise deletion to analyze those with no missing values in the variables of interest, resulting in a final analytic sample of 3,866 men and women.

This data set was chosen for a multitude of reasons, one of which was the data set had variables for domestic violence and religion. Furthermore, the domestic violence variables were gathered over multiple relationships, rather than just one relationship, which allows for a shift in the person's propensity to commit domestic violence, rather than one stagnant incident. Also, the religion variables corresponded to the social control dimensions, which aids in testing social control theory. The data was also publically available, which was another benefit of the dataset. Finally, the data pulled from a general population, which is a difference from the other studies that have been cited, which have mostly been pulled from college and adolescent populations.

Independent Variables

Dimensions of Social Control

Attachment: The variable that examines whether the respondent employs their religious beliefs was used to represent attachment. Respondents were asked to estimate how much they agree that they use their faith to solve everyday problems on a five point Likert scale, with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree. How much an individual uses their religion in their everyday life was used as a proxy to indicate how attached they are to this institution. Faith leaders encourage their congregation to employ their beliefs to solve everyday problems. Those with a high level of attachment will internalize these teachings, and attempt to follow them. As such, an individual using their beliefs often shows they are emotionally attached to the church, using the teachings even when there is no direct supervision.

Commitment: The independent variable testing the frequency of prayer in the past year is used to operationalize commitment, measured as one being less than once a month and seven being more than once a day. This is because the level of time spent praying would be a way to show the level of investment in the goal of being religious. If a person desired to be religious and to be in high esteem with the deity or holy figure in the religion, they would engage in prayer to increase their connection with the deity. They would not want to jeopardize this religiosity or high esteem by committing domestic violence, as violence is condemned in most religions (Segal, 2004: 10).

Belief: The independent variable testing religious importance was included to examine belief. Respondents were asked on a scale of 1 to 3, how important religion was

to the respondent. The response categories are one being little to no importance and three being more important than anything else. The logic behind using the importance of religion as belief was the acceptance of moral values that exist in the larger social structure. Religion especially bounds a person to rules, as there is usually a baptism or other ritual that is used as a contract between the individual and their deity regarding their intent to live their lives as written in the holy book. Secondly, religion creates more obedience by having eternal stakes. Essentially, the obedience and belief in the rules that are laid forth in the holy book results in eternal paradise, while disobedience and disbelief result in eternal punishment (Segal, 2004: 15).

Involvement: The final independent variable is the frequency of worship attendance in the past year, which is used to represent involvement, where one corresponds with attending services a few times a year and six corresponds with attending services more than once a week.. This measure is used because the amount of time a person attends their place of worship reduces the amount of time they would be able to engage in domestic violence.

On all four of these independent variables, those who indicated they were not religious were included in the category that indicated there was a low importance of the religion, since if a person is not religious, it is unlikely that it would be important to them. The averages, minimums, maximums, percentages, and standard deviations for these variables and subsequent variables are shown in Table 1. If they did not know the answer to the question or they skipped the question entirely, they are coded as missing.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N: 3866)

Variable Name	Minimum	Maximum	Percent	Average	Standard Deviation
Dependent Variable					

Domestic Violence	0	1	30.0%		N/A
Independent Variables					
Religious Importance	1	3		1.6	.65
Frequency of Prayer	1	7		3.9	2.3
Attendance	1	6		2.3	1.7
Employment of Belief	1	5		3.5	1.1
Control Variables					
African American	0	1	21.5%		N/A
White	0	1	67.9%		N/A
Other Race	0	1	8.1%		N/A
Biological Sex	0	1 (Male)	45.6%		N/A
Year of Birth	1974	1983		1979	1.8
Education (Years)	6	21		13.2	2
Alcohol Use	0	6		1.2	1.4
Illegal Drugs	0	1	10.1%		N/A

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is whether an individual has committed domestic violence. The variable is a combination of four variables that explore different types of domestic violence. Three of the variables tap into physical violence. They are: whether the respondent has pushed, shoved, or thrown something at his/her partner that could injure them in a fight, whether the respondent has slapped, kicked, or hit his/her partner, and whether the respondent has given his/her partner a sprain, bruise, or cut. The fourth variable taps into sexual violence. It asks the respondent if they have forced a partner to have sexual intercourse when their partner was unwilling.

The domestic violence measure for this study is a nominal variable, with zero meaning they have never committed any type of domestic violence and one meaning that they have committed at least one act of domestic violence at any point in their lives. The study had data on respondents who reported domestic violence in the past year and those who had committed domestic violence in a previous relationship, but not in the past year.

Only 15 people had engaged in domestic violence prior to the previous year only. Due to this, rather than lose valuable data, they were combined with those who had committed domestic violence in the past year to create a measure of those who had committed domestic violence at any point. Of this new category, 98.7% of respondents had committed their violence within the past year.

This variable was coded as binary, meaning if the respondents indicated any form of these domestic violence indicators, whether in the past 12 months or prior, they were given a value of one. If the respondents did not indicate any of these forms of domestic violence, they were coded with a zero. Those that were missing information on all of these variables remained missing. The missing values were due to the respondent skipping the question outside of a broader skip pattern or the respondent indicating they did not know whether they committed domestic violence or not.

Control Variables

The model controls for race, age, substance use, and education. Race is being controlled for because, on average, African-Americans have been shown to be more religious than other races, and thus may impact the results (Ellison et al, 2007). Also, in a 2014 study of trends of domestic violence from 2003 to 2012, non-Hispanic African-Americans and non-Hispanic people of two or more races had the highest incidence rate of domestic violence. They were followed by whites, Hispanics, and people of other races, respectively (Truman and Morgan, 2014). There are a wide range of ages that are present in the Wave III sample (18 to 26). This introduces the issue that age could account for volatility in relationships, thus the need for a control variable. Race variables are coded as dummy variables. Variables for being white and African-American are in

the models, while other races (individuals of Asian or Native American descent) are the reference group due to the above study.

Substance use will be controlled for to attempt to control for past deviance and because alcohol and drugs have been implicated in committing domestic violence (Berry, 2000 p. 25). Illegal drug use was a binary measure of whether the individual used illegal drugs in the past year, with zero being no and one being yes. Alcohol use was a self-report, nominal scale with zero being no alcohol use in the past year, one being once or twice in the past year and six meaning every day or every other day.

Finally, education will be controlled for because Delsol, Margolin, and John (2003) also showed men who abused their families and significant others tended to have less education than those who were not violent. This was measured using the highest year of school completed. It is also being used as a proxy for social class[1]. This is because with the list-wise deletion that was used created a small sample size, so it became necessary to use a proxy.

Methods

To test the hypothesis that there is a link between religion and domestic violence, a logistic regression model was used, because the dependent variable is binary. The logit model was the logical choice, because it constrains the probability to lie between zero and one. The model also allowed for the dependent variable to be non-linear, as it is not continuous. Model 1 was used to examine the effects of each of the four in one model,

[1] Unfortunately, the analyses cannot control for income due to the high level of missing data. The Pearson Correlation coefficient between income and education for those who had information on both measures was .188. This was significant at the $p < .001$ level.

stratified by gender. Model 2 includes the interaction terms between each bond and gender. There were not separate models for each social control bond because the theory as conceived by Hirschi (1969) indicates they work in collaboration with each other.

Clogg tests were used to compare the equality of the independent variable coefficients with respect to gender (Paternoster et al, 1998). Due to the fact that social control theory did not mention gender as a potential reason for differential control, as well as the gendered nature of domestic violence, religion, and the perceptions of gender roles, this is an important part of the study and the literature as a whole. So, with this addition, it becomes possible to test the differing protective factors that social control theory can have on domestic violence perpetration by gender.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to running the logistic regression models, it is important to run a crosstab of how many women and men engaged in domestic violence, which is shown in Table 2. Of the 2,102 women, 815 had engaged in violence (38.7%). Of 1,764 men, 363 had engaged in violence (20.6%). This finding leads to the conclusion, at least in this sample, that more women reported being domestic violence perpetrators than men. This further points to the importance of estimating separate models for men and women, since the rate of offending is so different.

Table 2: Gender and Domestic Violence

Variable	No violence	Violence in the Past	Total
Female	1287	815	2102
Male	1401	363	1764
Total	2688	1178	3866

Full Logistic Model

The logistic regression on the full sample shows that of the independent variables, only one achieved significance, as seen in Table 3. A one unit increase in attendance is associated with a .065 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. In terms of log odds[2], a one unit increase in attendance is associated with a 6.3% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. This was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Of the control variables, biological sex, being white, birth year, the highest level of education, alcohol use, and drug use achieved significance at the $p < .001$ level. Being male was associated with a 1.16 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. Regarding log odds, being male was associated with a 68.7% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence on average. People who are white is associated with a .826 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence compared to people of other races. In terms of log odds, people who are white are 43.7% less likely to commit domestic violence compared to other races. A one unit increase in the year of birth was associated with a .107 decrease in the log likelihood of perpetrating domestic violence, on average. In log odds, a one unit increase in the year of birth was associated with a 10% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. A one unit increase in educational attainment was associated with a .190 decrease in the log likelihood of engaging in domestic violence, on average. Or, a

[2] Log odds were calculated by exponentiating the beta coefficient and subtracting this product by one. It was then multiplied by 100 in order to create a percentage. This was done to make the coefficients more intuitive to interpret.

one unit increase in educational attainment was associated with a 17% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. A one unit increase in the use of alcohol was associated with a .128 increase in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence. In terms of log odds, alcohol use was associated with a 13.6% increase in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. Finally, a one unit increase in illegal drug use was associated with a .484 increase in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. Regarding log odds, a one unit increase in the use of illegal drugs was associated with a 62% increase in the log odds of committing domestic violence.

Table 3: Full Model Logit (N: 3866)

Variable Name	Beta	Standard Error
Religious Importance	-.084	.08
Prayer Frequency	-.002	.021
Attendance	-.065*	.03
Belief Employment	.034	.05
Biological Sex	-1.16***	.08
African-American	-.064	.13
White	-.826***	.12
Birth Year	-.107***	.02
Education	-.190***	.02
Alcohol Use	.128***	.13
Illegal Drug Use	.484***	.03

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

Female-Only Model

After this, the models were run separately by gender. For females (Table 4), none of the independent variables achieved significance. However, four of the control variables did. Level of education had a negative relationship with the perpetration of

domestic violence. Specifically, a one unit increase in the level of education is associated with a .181 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. In terms of log odds, a one unit increase in the level of education attained is associated with a 16% decrease in the log odds in the likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. This was significant at the $p < .001$ level. Females who are white have a .727 decrease in the log likelihood of committing of domestic violence in comparison to females of other races. Or, females who are white have a 51% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence in comparison to females of other races. A one unit increase in the birth year was associated with a .083 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence at the $p< .01$ level. Or, a one unit increase in the age of the respondent was associated with an 8% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. Finally, a one unit increase in alcohol use was associated with a .145 increase in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence. In other words, females that used alcohol had a 15% increase in the log odds of committing domestic violence at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 4: Female Model (N: 2102)

Variable Name	Beta	Standard Error
Religious Importance	-.046	.1
Prayer Frequency	-.025	.03
Attendance	-.050	.03
Belief Employment	.007	.06
African-American	.046	.17
White	-.727***	.15
Birth Year	-.083**	.03
Education	-.181***	.03
Alcohol Use	.145***	.04
Illegal Drug Use	.302	.18

* $p<.05$

** $p<.01$

*** p<.001

Male-Only Model

In the model that included only males (Table 5), there were also no independent variables that achieved significance. There were some control variables that attained significance for males. Educational attainment was significant at the $p < .001$ level. A one unit increase in the level of education is associated with a .205 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. Or, a one unit increase in educational attainment is associated with an 18% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence, on average. Being a white male was associated with a decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence by .986 compared to individuals of other races. In terms of log odds, being a white male was associated with a 62% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence compared to males of other races. This was significant at the $p < .001$ level. A one unit increase in birth year was associated with a .146 decrease in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence, on average. Regarding log odds, a one unit increase in birth year was associated with a 13% decrease in the log odds of committing domestic violence on average. This was significant at the $p < .001$ level. A one unit increase in the use of alcohol was associated with a .111 increase in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence at the $p <.01$ level. In terms of log odds, a one unit increase in alcohol use was associated with a 12% increase in the perpetration of domestic violence on average. Finally, illegal drug use achieved significance at the $p < .001$ level. A one unit increase in the use of illegal drugs was associated with a .670 increase in the log likelihood of committing domestic violence on

average. In other words, a one unit increase in the use of illegal drugs was associated with a 95% increase in the log odds of committing domestic violence.

Table 5: Male Model (N: 1764)

Variable Name	Beta	Standard Error
Religious Importance	-.158	.13
Prayer Frequency	.037	.04
Attendance	-.094	.05
Belief Employment	.075	.07
African-American	-.247	.21
White	-.986***	.18
Birth Year	-.146***	.04
Education	-.205***	.03
Alcohol Use	.111**	.04
Illegal Drug Use	.670***	.17

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

Clogg Test

To ascertain the equality of the coefficients between males and females for each dimension of the social bond, a series of Clogg tests were conducted (Paternoster et al., 1998). There was no evidence to lead to rejecting the null hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the independent variables by gender at the $p < .05$ level.

Sensitivity Analyses

Due to missing data, these main analyses do not control for the conservative or liberal dimension of different religions and affiliations. However, it has been shown that people from more conservative faiths tend to be more likely to commit domestic violence, on average (Douki et al, 2003; Jung and Olsen, 2017). Thus, additional analyses were run with controls regarding religious affiliation and how conservative the

religions were, as shown in Table 7. Two dummy variables were created that referenced (1) whether the respondent was Catholic, Protestant, or another religion (i.e., Jewish, Buddhist, or Hindu) with other religion as the reference category and (2) whether the respondent's religious leanings were from a conservative, moderate, or liberal tradition compared to other leanings (used as the refreence category). Both measures are based on self-report. When the models including these measures were examined, there was no significant relationships found for any of the key independent variables of for these two additional variables.

Table 7: Sensitivity Analysis (N: 1978)

Variable Name	Beta	Standard Error
Religious Importance	-.079	.08
Prayer Frequency	-.001	.02
Attendance	-.063*	.03
Belief Employment	.036	.05
Protestant	-.049	.09
Catholic	-.025	.13
Conservative Religion	-.171	.17
Moderate Religion	.124	.15
Liberal Religion	.041	.22
Biological Sex	-1.164***	.08
African-American	-.069	.14
White	-.824***	.12
Birth Year	-.108***	.02
Education	-.192***	.19
Alcohol Use	.128***	.03
Illegal Drug Use	.475***	.13

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

Discussion

One surprising finding in this study is that women reported engaging in more domestic violence acts than men. This could be an issue related to one's willingness to report. Generally speaking, it is more acceptable for women to report hitting a partner than a male reporting the same (Scarduzio et al, 2016). When women report domestic violence, it is usually thought to be because of self defense or because of a pre-existing threat by the partner, whereas when men report domestic violence, it is more likely to be perceived as a way to assert dominance, control, and/or power. Furthermore, when there is a male perpetrator and a female victim, people tend to invoke the code of chivalry to assert that it is never acceptable, under any circumstances, for a male to hit a female (Scarduzio et al, 2016). This finding suggests that tone potential reason fewer men reported domestic violence was not that they did not engage in violence, but they were concerned with how they would be perceived if they admitted it.

However, there may also be an alternate explanation. Studies, such as Hamberger (1997), suggest that the violence women engage in is reactionary in nature. In a sample of 52 arrested women, 51% said that men began the pattern of violence, while only 27.4% of women indicated that they started the violence (Hamberger, 1997). In the remaining 21.5% of the cases, it was unclear who began the violence. Twenty-four (46%) women indicated they only engaged in violence to defend themselves from an attack from their partner (Hamberger, 1997). Saunders (1986) came to a similar conclusion. It was found that 71% of the women in the sample that were battered and arrested used violence as self-defense (Saunders, 1986).

In 2006, Miller began a qualitative study of 95 women who were in treatment programs for domestic violence. Three types of behavior were identified that led women

to be arrested for domestic violence (Miller, 2006). The first category identified was generalized violent behavior (Miller, 2006). This category includes women who used violence in a variety of circumstances, not just intimate partners. They tend to be violent against neighbors, family members, or strangers. This group had the smallest amount of women in it, about 5% of the women in the program, and five women in the sample (Miller, 2006).

The second category, frustration response, comprised 30% of the women in the sample (Miller, 2006). These women tended to have domestic violence backgrounds, either with their current partner or a former one. The domestic violence they endured was psychological, physical, sexual, or some combination. They used violence to cease behavior by their partners. They typically reacted to a situation that may have led to a mutually violent altercation (Miller, 2006).

The final category is defensive behavior (Miller, 2006). This group was made up of about 65% of the women in the sample. Women who exhibited this behavior tended to use violence as a means to avoid violence or to get out of a violent situation with their partner before it escalated. These women had long histories of violent victimization at the hands of their partner, and felt there was nowhere to turn. In most cases, the woman was impeded from escaping, generally from having children, and her violence occurred after the male initiated violence. When the women thought their children would be in danger from the violence, they responded in kind to make their partner desist (Miller, 2006).

In short, there is a chance that the reason women in the sample were more likely to self-report domestic violence perpetration than the men was that the violence was

reactive to their partners' use of violence. While this study largely focuses on perpetration, a future direction for research would be examining the incidence rate of victimization in these women and what the motivation behind their violence was. Is it a survival mechanism to avoid danger, or does religion play a role?

Interestingly, the independent variables were not significant for women. This finding may make sense when viewed from the lens of the Miller (2006) study. If the violence was reactionary, they may feel as though there was no other way to avoid utilizing violence themselves, which may render them with a feeling of absolution regarding the reaction of the church or the holy figure. If the violence was not initiated by the women, they may feel as though they were only responding to the violence in order to protect themselves and their children, if any exist. More research is needed to ascertain the feelings of religious women towards reactionary domestic violence.

The finding regarding the full model was that only one variable achieved statistical significance: attendance. This finding seems to be driven by the effects on men. Although the Clogg test did not indicates a significant difference in the coefficients by gender, the coefficient for men in the male-only logistic regression was almost twice as high as the coefficient for attendance in the female-only model. After viewing the literature, this makes sense. Ellison et al (2007) found a negative relationship between the frequency of attendance of religious events and the likelihood of domestic violence. For every one-unit increase in religious attendance, the likelihood of domestic violence falls by 5%. Ellison and Anderson (2001) found that regular attendance had a robust and statistically significant negative relationship with domestic abuse (Ellison and Anderson, 2001). Men who attended church once a week or more were about 60.7% less likely to

commit domestic violence than nonattenders. Previous research has also indicated that behavioral measures of religiosity, such as the frequency of worship attendance, tend to be more strongly correlated to deviance than the measures of religious attitudes or beliefs (Evans et al, 1995; Tittle and Welch, 1983). These other studies as well as the current study cast further doubt on the Hirschi and Stark (1969) study. This also introduces doubt on the conclusion found in that study that religion was irrelevant to delinquency.

In regards to attendance being the only independent variable that achieved significance, this was also shown in the literature. Evans et al (1995) and Tittle and Welch (1983), behavioral measures of religiosity may be more strongly correlated than measures of religious attitudes or beliefs because the person forms relationships with other believers, religious friends and family members, and other parishioners.

While it would be easy to disregard the role of religion in domestic violence given these findings, that would be a mistake. Given these findings, it is likely that instead of all four dimensions of the social bond as defined by Hirschi being what prevents domestic violence, it may be the organizational aspect of religion that has the more salient effect, which is closely linked to the behavioral dimension of the social bond. Future research should focus on whether the the function of being in a church leads to a decrease in domestic violence in comparison to those who do not attend worship services. It would also inform the literature if research was done on whether or not attending religious services had a larger or smaller impact on domestic violence than other sources of social bonds, such as schools or workplaces.

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, there is an issue with temporal ordering in some of the variables. The domestic violence variable

asked for the past year's behaviors and beyond. While variables such as attendance and prayer frequency had the scope of being in the past year, the employment of beliefs and the importance of religion was asked at the moment of the survey. This may need to be addressed in later research using longitudinal studies. Also, there were not controls for aggressive tendencies. This was not included because the independent variable included ever having being violent with a partner, thus including past violent behavior. Also, or other social controls, like family attachment or attachment to school institutions were not included. Future research may include this to see if the relationships found are mediated by these variables.

In short, the link between religion and domestic violence, and crime in general, has largely found a negative connection. While Hirschi and Stark found no correlation in 1969, but later studies have found quite robust links. While this study casts some doubt on these findings, this is not a suggestion to end the study of religion in regard to deviant acts. Further studies are required to draw substantive conclusions regarding this phenomenon and others surrounding it, such as the role of religion in the decisions of women to commit domestic violence, the role of prayer as absolution for committing domestic violence, the differential link of religion between victimless crimes and crimes with a victim, and the role of social control theory to explain the link. Despite the relative silence in recent years regarding religion and crime, this line of scientific inquiry has much more to tell researchers about crime, and to ignore that would be misguided and would limit the understanding of the nuances of the decisions behind committing crime.

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